492

192 "kul kul" - to call the chickens. (Footnote 87)

"fwa fwa" - cascade, waterfall.

"täb alä" - drop by drop ("alä", lit. he went, is the common auxiliary).

"täf täf alä" - poured liquid from a narrow-necked bottle.

"twa alä" - water falling on fire.

"cha alä" - became silent, tranquil, calm; hence - deserted village (1)

"chechch alä" - began to chant; hence - birds in the morning (Twitter).

"gwawqa alä" - knocked loudly at door

"kof kof alä"- marched with gravity (sound of shoes).

"encheq alä" - (sound of) picking feet from muddy place.

"aguränarränä" - murmured (sound of large drum), hence - rolling thunder, and incipient rebellion.

"anchabächchäbä" - clapped hands rythmically, to keep time for music, or to greet a "great man" (Africa style).

"andagaddaga" - made gluglu (water through pipe).

193 Grammar, called "qoasso" or "säwasew", is mastered only by the
195 traditional-educated church scholars ("mänher") and a few members of
554 noble families. Perhaps only a few hundred individuals master all its intricacies. Emperor Haile Selassie's speeches strike the average

[192] Footnote 87 - Other calls to animals include:
"Kulel Kulel" - to call lost donkey at night.
"Kes Kes" - (or "cheg") to drive sheep on
"Kis Kis" - to drive calves on.
"Buch Buch" - call to dogs.
"Wush" - to drive loaded donkeys from path, so the master can ride through
"Chē" or "Mäch" - to get a horse or mule started when riding it.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

193 Amhara layman as esoteric and hard to understand - which causes them to
195 be respected all the more. "Soasso" literally means "ladder" in t he
354 Geez language, and the study of grammar is regarded as "uplifting", steps on the ladder of knowledge, achievable fully only by the few, but respected almost as an end in itself.

193 Special features of this grammar are the following: There is no present tense, and the future tense is used also to indicate the present, as in other Semitic languages. A completed action, in the sense of a "present that has become a past" is expressed by a gerund compound tense. Frequentatives, i.e. reduplicated syllables, are much used to indicate reiterative, intensive, augmentative and attenuative action; foreign scholars believe them to be of Cushitic origin (Footnote 87). Possessive pronouns often take the form of infixes. Among noteworthy absences in this grammar are: No male or female genders, though sex distinctions are made even in concepts of inanimate objects.

There are no "cases" in the Latin sense. There are no subjunctives. The passive and reciprocal voices take the same form, though the meanings are distinguished. A complexity that never fails to complicate matters for non-Amharic speakers (other Ethiopians as well as foreigners) is the gemination, the duplication of a number of consonants, "lala", which gives the word another meaning entirely because it changes the basic stem. The basic stem of verbs is most often a Semitic "triliteral", but through loss or gain is often changed to a "biliteral" or "quadriliteral".

The syntax of Amharic is regarded by foreign scholars as basically Cushitic, much like the vocabulary, and unlike its grammar (Footnote 88).

Footnote 87 - Leslau: Le Thème Verbal Frequentative dans les Langues Etiopiens.
Revue des Etudes Semitiques, I, PP. 15-31. Paris, 1939.

Footnote 88 - Leslau: The Influence of Cushitic on the Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. (in) Word, 1945, pp. 54-82.

193 (E.g. instead of "the man who came", Amharic constructs the sentence "who came the man".)

212 Orthography shows considerable ambivalence of choice, perhaps due to the later influences of Arabic and to the Amharic additions to the Geez alphabet. Thus, interchanges of "q" and "g", "t" and "t", "m" and "n" are common among consonants; "ä" and "i"; "e" and "ə" and "a" somewhat less commonly exchanged among vowels. This confuses the root, vowel and tense indications for the foreigner, and even Amharic-speakers when discussing a matter not commonly discussed, may misunderstand each other because of these interchanges, especially if they come from different regions.

c) Regional Variations.

197 Part of the wide variety of regional linguistic differences among Amharic-speakers is due to the long, conservative, provincial semi-isolation. Some of this is not much different from provincialisms in rural Europe; so that the pronounciation of even common words such as "aydollïm" (he isn't here) identifies the Amhara from Shoa, "aydällïm" from Begemdir province (Gondar). But a much greater part of the regional differences is due to the fact that for many centuries, perhaps millenia, the Amharic speakers of Begemdir (Gondar) and Gojjam provinces have been exposed to "old-Cushitic" languages such as Agau, while the Amhara of Shoa province has been exposed to "new-Cushitic" languages such as Galla.

The Abyssinian of Tigre province, whose "Tigre" or "Tigrinya" language may be a closer derivative of Geez than Amharic, has long maintained Semitic ties through continued influence of developing Arabic from Yemen and the Red Sea, and has in turn affected the inland Amharic of Semyen-Begemdir, whose people shared Abyssinian religion and culture. Western Amharas, e.g. in Gojjam province, but also in the trading center of Gondar, have been affected by vulgate Arabic spoken

191 ETHIOPIAN FOLKTALES ASCRIBED TO THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AMHARA WIT, ALÄQA GÄBRE-HANNA:—Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia today, is gradually be-
212 coming the *lingua franca* of the empire. Until recently it was spoken mainly on the fertile
538 highland plateau of central and northwestern Ethiopia, in part of what was formerly known as Abyssinia. Predominantly Coptic Christian, the Amhara people have sacred writings in Ge'ez, old Ethiopic. Amharic has adapted this ancient script to its own use. The folklore of the Amhara is mainly oral (except for religious texts) and represents a crosscurrent of Mid-
[565] dle Eastern and African cultures. Traditionally, Amhara society was one of priests, feudal lords, and peasants. Lower on the social scale were non-Coptic ethnic groups who performed such important economic functions as ironsmithing and pottery-making.

538 This is reflected in the folklore. On non-religious, everyday subjects, the wit of the Am-
522 hara is peasant-like, earthy, full of tales of Rabelaisian appetites and sly solutions to human
● 193 problems. The Amharic language lends itself readily to puns and hidden meanings, since many verbs can have double or triple interpretations due to the hidden variations in the basic verbal stem and the absence or presence of gemination of some consonants. The listener must pay close attention. If he misinterprets the context and fails to discern the pun, he is often made the butt of the next tricky joke by those who have heard it before. The more a storyteller and wit masters the *sowaso* 'grammar' of the Amharic language, the better he can manipulate this humor.

538 A master of this art was *Aläqa* 'Chief' (an honorary title) Gäbre-Hanna, a contem-
159 porary of Emperor Menelik just before the end of the nineteenth century. As far as is known, he never put into writing any of his stories, witticisms, linguistic gymnastics, and philosophical puns. But to this day the peasants and even the nobles remember his stories well and tell them so often that a number of versions have developed.

He was a native of Gondar and had all the provincial pride of the "Gondarey" in the one-time greatness of this town and district that is now back country. He lived at the time the present capital, Addis Ababa, was being built and the King of Shoa had become Emperor of Abyssinia. Like many another "Gondarey," Aläqa Gäbre-Hanna pretended to disdain the newfangled importations of Emperor Menelik and the growing employment of subjugated Galla tribal chiefs at the imperial court. Jokingly, he took the liberty of referring to the Emperor's home province, Shoa, as "that Galla province." (Even today much
[191] Galliña is spoken there, a result of the sixteenth century conquest of the area by Galla tribes.) No one else would have dared such a remark, but he was popular with Emperor Menelik and especially with the Empress Taitu, and could tell them certain frank truths and tease them with irony in a semi-polite manner. However, he was not a court jester.